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ABSTRACT

This newsletter theme issue contains five articles about the growing Latino population in the South and its impact on communities, particularly in rural areas. "Social Capital of Mexican Communities in the South" (Ruben Hernandez-Leon, Victor Zuniga) argues that, to understand and advocate for Mexican newcomer communities in the South, scholars, educators, and human services workers should take into account the social capital, funds of knowledge, and other resources that immigrants bring with them. The case of Dalton, Georgia, where Latino students now comprise half the school population, shows how Mexican immigrants with a lengthy migratory experience in the United States are transplanting social networks, experiences, and knowledge accumulated elsewhere in their migration to ease their adaptation to their new community. "Latino Immigration to Arkansas: Saints and Salsa Meet Poultry and Protestants" (Deborah O. Erwin) draws on interviews in three rural Arkansas counties to describe how Latino immigrants are integrating into rural communities and school systems, how local residents are responding, and how newcomers are interacting with the health care system. "Camas Calientes" (hot beds--housing conditions so crowded that people sleep in shifts) (Jorge H. Atiles, Stephanie A. Bohon) reports on poor housing conditions in four rural Georgia counties with large Latino populations. Inability of low-income Latinos to improve their housing conditions was exacerbated by a housing shortage and by low levels of literacy and English proficiency. Other articles are "Social Networks and Affordable Housing: The Case of Bonita Springs, Florida" (Javier Stanziola) and "Tree Planting and Guest Worker Programs: The Growing Importance of Immigration Policy on the Rural South" (Josh McDaniel). (SV)

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Southern Perspectives

Vol. 6, Number 1 Fall 2002

SOUTHERN RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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Meeting the Challenges of the Rural South through Land-Grant Research and Outreach Education

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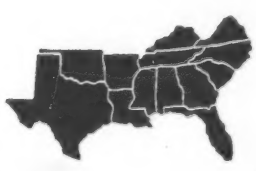

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Social Capital of Mexican Communities in the South

RUBÉN HERNÁNDEZ-LEÓN
University of California
VÍCTOR ZÚÑIGA
Universidad de Monterrey

Introduction

Spearheaded by Mexican immigration, the South has become a major new destination for Latino settlement. At the end of the 20th century, the region's Latino population increased dramatically, fostering the rise of many newcomer communities not only in large metropolitan centers but also in small cities, towns and rural areas. Between 1990 and 2000, the Latino population living in Southern states nearly tripled, growing from about 670,000 to more than 1.9 million (see Figure 1) [1]. The rapid and massive arrival of thousands of Mexicans and other Latino immigrants to the South is changing the social, demographic and cultural landscape of many states, which, with the exception of Texas and Florida, had no tradition of settled Latin American migration.

The new Latino immigration to the South is:

- transforming the ethnic makeup of local communities and changing the traditional black and white racial dynamics of the region;
- affecting public and private institutions, which now have to mediate the incorporation of newcomers into the host society; and
- remaking the symbols traditionally associated with the South as Spanish, Catholicism, and Latino music and cuisines are becoming part of public spaces and landscapes from Virginia to Arkansas.

At the same time, immigration is:

- creating new inter-ethnic and linguistic tensions and forms of accommodation as people discuss the merits of bilingual education and Latino newcomers move into historically black neighborhoods;
- producing new economic dynamics as a result of immigrant and Latino ethnic entrepreneurship; and
- integrating the South with the larger networks and circuits of migration of the Southwest, Mexico, and other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.

In this article, we argue that in order to understand and advocate for Mexican newcomer communities in the region, scholars and practitioners should take into account the social capital, funds of knowledge, and other resources that immigrants bring with them to their new home. This perspective contrasts with the view of immigrants as economically and socially displaced individuals and victims of globalization. Needless to say, migration results from economic transformations which make labor redundant in one place but necessary elsewhere. In this context, migrants – particularly undocumented ones – are often exploited and may be victimized by human smugglers, ruthless landlords and employers.

Yet, even in the context of adverse policies and economic circumstances, immigrants and their families are able to develop social networks, make decisions and detect employment opportunities across states, regions and countries. To ignore this capacity is to reduce migrants to the role of puppets in a play where they have neither agency nor a voice of their own. Using the case of Dalton, GA, we show how Mexican immigrants are transplanting resources, information and knowledge accumulated elsewhere in their migration to ease their adaptation to Southern communities. This capacity stems from the fact that although newcomers to the South, Mexicans have accumulated a great deal of social capital and experience as sojourners and permanent immigrants to the United States.

Mexicans in Dalton

During the 1990s, Mexicans and other Latino immigrants flocked to Dalton, GA, a small city in the northwest part of the state, hosting the largest

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From the Director

by Bo Beaulieu

Many researchers and Extension educators in our region's land-grant system have been carefully studying the host of data that have been released by the U.S. Census Bureau over the last several months. While demographers were hinting a few years ago that the South's Latino population was on the rise, many were surprised when the official 2000 Census population data revealed that the pace of growth in the region was far greater than many had predicted.

In an effort to more fully understand how Latinos are faring in our region, the Southern Rural Development Center joined forces with Drs. Rogelio Saenz and Cruz Torres at Texas A&M University to help advance our understanding of this important and expanding segment of our region's population. Drs. Saenz and Torres applied for, and successfully secured, funding from the Farm Foundation to help organize a research forum that would showcase some of the best research being conducted on Latinos in the Southern region or its states. The SRDC helped to plan and implement this important research workshop.

The set of articles included in this issue of *Southern Perspectives* represent abbreviated versions of some of the important papers that were presented during the course of the research conference. The complete version of these documents, coupled with others showcased during the workshop, will be included in a future issue of the professional journal, *Southern Rural Sociology*. Dr. Saenz and Dr. Torres will serve as the guest editors for this special volume.

If you carefully read the articles contained in this newsletter, you will come away with some very important observations. First, our new Latino residents have a tremendous pool of talent and skills that are being used to promote a better life for themselves and their families. Second, Latinos are facing some tremendous challenges as they settle into their new communities, including lack of decent affordable housing, limited access to health services, and lack of comprehensive programs that can help their children effectively transition into their schools. And third, some communities in the South are far more welcoming than others to the growth of the Latino population in their localities, and as such, cultural conflicts are occurring in increasing numbers in some places.

These series of articles offer our land-grant system, community colleges and others involved in community development work much food for thought. No doubt, we need to work hard to develop and deliver educational programs that meet the needs of our Latino residents. At the same time, we must provide guidance to the increasing number of communities in the region that are experiencing dramatic changes due to the influx of new Latino residents. You will be hearing more in the near future about an important national conference that will be sponsored by Texas A&M's Cooperative Extension Service, a conference that will showcase some of the best educational programs being targeted to Latinos. The SRDC is proud to be a co-sponsor of this upcoming conference. It is our hope that you will give serious consideration to taking part in this important conference so that we can all improve our capacity to be responsive to the South's increasingly diverse audiences.❖

Southern Perspectives

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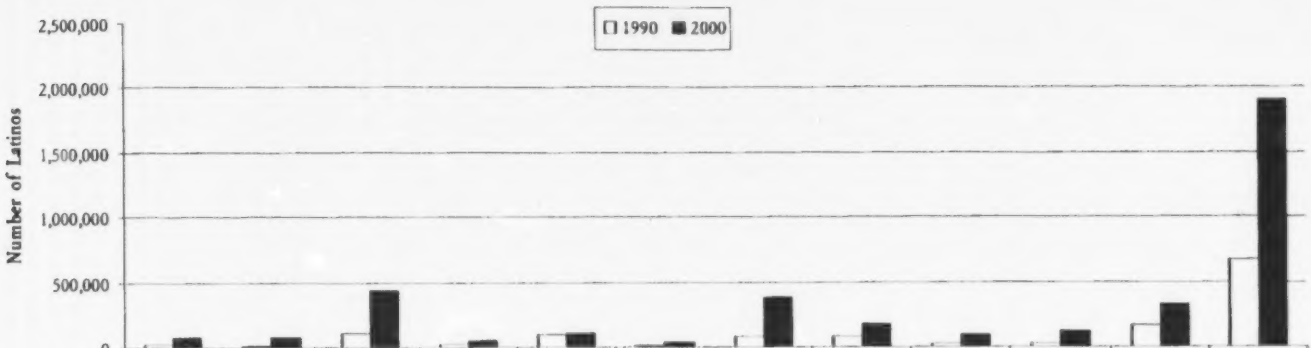
Social Capacity of Mexican Communities continued from page 1

Figure 1. Latinos in the South: 1990 and 2000.



	AL	AR	GA	KY	LA	MS	NC	OK	SC	TN	VA	Total
1990	24,629	19,876	108,922	21,984	93,044	15,931	76,726	86,160	30,551	32,741	160,288	670,852
2000	75,830	86,866	435,227	59,939	107,738	39,569	378,963	179,304	95,076	123,838	329,540	1,911,890

Southern States and Region's Total

cluster of carpet production in the world. As a result of immigration, Dalton underwent a true sociodemographic revolution. Four pieces of data illustrate the dramatic transformation of this city's ethnic composition:

- Whitfield County, where Dalton is the seat, was 3.2 percent Latino in 1990. By 2000, this segment of the population had grown to more than 22 percent [3].
- Reflecting this increase and a pattern of high concentration in the city itself, the proportion of Latinos in Dalton expanded from 6.5 percent in 1990 to 40.2 percent in 2000 [3].
- Latino pupils were less than 4 percent of the enrollment of Dalton Public Schools (DPS) during the 1989-1990 academic year, yet by 2000-2001 they had become the majority with more than 51 percent of the student body [2].
- According to the 2000 Census, 37 percent of the Latino population in Dalton is less than 18 years old, suggesting the significance of families as part of the newcomer group [3].

In a survey we conducted with Latino parents whose children were enrolled in DPS in the winter of 1997-1998, we determined that 90 percent of these adults were born in Mexico. Thus, the Latino or Hispanic settlement of Dalton was clearly a Mexican community. Data collected through this survey shows that although nearly three-quarters of these parents had been in Dalton fewer than six years, many were not inexperienced migrants. Nearly 70 percent of these adults were originally from western and north-central Mexico, where sending communities have accumulated more than a century of migratory experience in this country. More importantly, 62 percent of the men and 50 percent of the women were living in some other U.S. state before moving to Dalton, mostly in California, Texas or Illinois. In fact, fathers and mothers had accumulated more than nine and five years of migratory experience in the United States, respectively, by the time they had arrived in Dalton.

"Mexicans and other Latino immigrants are transplanting and using the social capital accumulated in the various places comprised in their migratory careers to adapt to their new home."

As a consequence, these immigrants had amassed significant experience in U.S. labor markets and exposure to this country's institutions. They had also accumulated a wealth of social ties and contacts which connect them to their homelands in Mexico but also to traditional destinations of Mexican migration in the United States. Five years of ethnographic observations and activism in Dalton have showed us that rather than severing their ties to places like Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston, newcomers actively use such ties and the knowledge accrued in those cities to successfully settle in the South. In short, Mexicans and other Latino immigrants are transplanting and using the social capital accumulated in the various places comprised in their migratory careers to adapt to their new home. The following examples illustrate this point:

- In a matter of years, Mexican immigrants have organized a successful soccer league which now groups hundreds of players, holds elections for a board of directors, rents office space, keeps the club's fees in bank accounts, and organizes tournaments across the South. Much of the experience needed to direct the Liga Mexicana de Futbol was actually accumulated by the members of its board in the highly sophisticated soccer leagues of Los Angeles.
- Yet another example are the more than 60 Latino businesses – from meat markets to real estate agencies – established in Dalton in the last decade. The entrepreneurs that have ventured into restaurants, bakeries and grocery stores learned the ropes of these businesses not as owners but as employees of similar establishments in Chicago and Houston.

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Latino Immigration to Arkansas

SAINTS AND SALSA MEET POULTRY AND PROTESTANTS

DEBORAH O. ERWIN
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

Introduction

In the past five years, Arkansas has been one of the national leaders in the percentage of Latino growth with an increase of 337 percent [1,4]. Unlike much of the former immigration patterns and experiences in the United States for seasonal farm work or into major metropolitan areas, 59 percent of these new immigrants to Arkansas are settling in rural counties. Here they are finding work in poultry processing plants, other light industry, and timber planting and processing.

As little prior research has been conducted with the Latino populations in Arkansas, the goal of this ethnographic research project was to begin defining and describing the dynamic nature of the experience of Latinos who migrate to work in rural Arkansas as well as to describe the nature of this immigration experience for local Caucasians in the communities. The research questions of this pilot study were 1) who is immigrating (i.e., men, women or families together)? 2) why are immigrants selecting specific rural communities? 3) how are the immigrants integrating into the community? 4) how are individuals from the local community responding? and 5) how are the new immigrants interacting with the health care community? It is important to document the varying experiences of immigrants, particularly as those in the rural South are likely to have different experiences than immigrants who are much closer to the border, living in a larger city, or traveling across the South as migrant farm workers.

Ethnographic data from 96 interviews with Caucasians and Latinos from three counties in Arkansas were collected during 2001 to examine representative perspectives regarding the rapid Latino immigration process occurring in these rural southern communities. The selected counties contained small communities of less than 7,000 people with as many as 50 percent of the residents being Latino immigrants from Mexico or South or Central America. Background information on 23 of the Latino respondents involved in structured interviews is displayed in Table 1.

Who and Why Are Immigrants Selecting Specific Rural Communities?

Work and family reunification are the two primary motivations for these Latinos to immigrate to small, rural Arkansas towns. This desire for family reunification and work has become a major catalyst for the growth of the poultry industry in Arkansas as well. Entire families are immigrating, not just single males.

Table 1. Immigration Characteristics of Latino Respondents (n=23).

Percent	Responses
84.9	From Mexico
72.7	Lived in United States less than eight years
78.8	Lived in Arkansas less than five years
64.0	Lived in only one place in Arkansas
24.2	Moved to Arkansas from another state

How Are the Immigrants Integrating into the Community?

The Latino immigrants are enjoying the relative "tranquilo" or peaceful nature of the small towns. They are giving up connections to large barrios like in Los Angeles, but they are also avoiding gangs, drugs and violence. Many of the Latinos in Arkansas indicate that the small rural community environment more closely resembles their home communities in rural Mexico. Availability of existing housing and the growth of schools in these Arkansas communities are positive attributes for Latinos immigrating to these small towns.

SOCIAL CAPACITY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

These entrepreneurs have been able to borrow money, obtain information, and acquire entrepreneurial skills from co-ethnic contacts in those cities and elsewhere. This is the case of a very successful supermarket owner in Dalton who marshaled the capital, butcher and shopkeeper skills needed for his store through his ties to friends and relatives back in Chicago, his original destination as an immigrant in the United States.

Conclusion

Starting in the late 1980s, Mexican and Latino settlement in the South progressed at a surprisingly rapid pace. At the dawn of the 21st century, the number of Latinos living in the region, excluding Texas and Florida, had reached nearly 2 million people. This figure is bound to grow during the current decade as networks and employment opportunities continue to channel additional newcomers to the South. Although newcomers to the region, Mexicans and Latino immigrants in general have amassed a wealth of experience in U.S. labor markets, social ties and information, which they are actively using to settle in their new home.❖

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This contrasts with experiences in some areas, especially the housing challenges reported in more upscale retirement communities like Bonita Springs, FL [3]. Many of these Arkansas communities were economically depressed and "dying," and the increased Latino immigration and infusion of Latino children are actually rejuvenating poor rural schools whose budgets are based on student attendance. In addition, homes, trailers and land that may have been for sale for long periods of time in these poor rural communities with a limited buyer market are now able to provide inexpensive options for the influx of new workers from Mexico and South America.

A growing majority of Latino immigrants could be considered "settlers." Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS.

How Are Individuals from the Local Community Responding?

In response to questions related to "cultural differences" of Latinos and Anglos, 30 percent of the Arkansans mentioned issues such as playing music outside, taking care of or lack of caring for housing, flag flying (Mexican), goat slaughtering, chicken keeping, etc. as problems; ten percent of the Latinos mentioned problems (in relation to interference or lack of appreciation of their cultural practices). However, almost half of the Latino participants (48 percent) mentioned racial and ethnic discrimination as one of the things that they do not like or is a cause for concern to them. "La gente es muy cerrada, y no les gustan los cambios" (the people are not open-minded, and they don't want changes).

Certainly, in a small community, the fact that the population became almost 50 percent Latino in less than eight years creates conflict simply out of the fear of change on the part of the existing residents. This is clearly illustrated by a comment from a 44-year-old Caucasian woman when asked about changes happening in her community: "I worry that I'm being swallowed up in a culture that isn't mine."

With regard to ethnic segregation, a school principal in one community points out that the Latino and Caucasian children play well together in school and are completely integrated until the fourth grade. However, by Christmas vacation of the fourth grade, they have begun to segregate themselves. She hypothesized that it is during this time that the children begin having sleepovers and become more active in extracurricular activities that involve parents, carpools and visiting in each other's homes.

How Are the New Immigrants Interacting with the Health Care Community?

Although 61 percent of Latinos interviewed had no health insurance, 57 percent had seen a private doctor in their community. Likewise, 35 percent said they had "no health concerns or problems." Problems that were mentioned included having no health insurance (30 percent); language problems with providers, especially in an emergency (30 percent); having to pay cash for everything (26 percent); and various health problems such as high blood pressure, joint pain and skin problems. Thirty percent of the Latino respondents said they had not used any health services, had not seen a health provider of any kind since immigrating, and/or did not know how to seek such services.

Conclusions

Using a classification scheme employed by immigration analysts, a growing majority of the Latino immigrants to Arkansas could be considered "settlers" [3]. There is certainly a proportion of temporary "sojourners" that are typically single males sending money back to Mexico. However, these ethnographic data indicate that the number of Latino families immigrating from other states, as well as directly from their country of origin, who are making Arkansas their permanent home is likely to increase. The availability of year-round poultry, wood processing, manufacturing and timber industries in these rural communities, as compared to seasonal agricultural work, promotes permanent settlement as well.

These Latino families are creating true communities within these Arkansas towns. This is demonstrated most distinctly by the growth of the Roman Catholic Church within this Southern Protestant "Bible Belt." Ten years ago, a popular young priest in one of these Arkansas communities started a Mass in his parish in Spanish with eight people in attendance. Now they have as many as 2,000 Latinos for Mass at the two services held every Sunday in Spanish. This same Catholic Church has only 80 Caucasian, non-Hispanic members. It used to be the smallest church in town; now it is the largest. The congregation serves tacos on Sunday afternoon outside the new facility built to serve the increased congregation size and to provide more fellowship space. The entrance is adorned with a large concrete statue of La Virgen de Guadalupe brought from Mexico. The priest says, "The grass is worn away around the church now; there is real community here."

These descriptive data paint colorful and generally positive pictures of the assimilation process for most of the Latinos and the Arkansans in these small communities. The cultural traits that many of the Latino immigrants brought from their native countries – strong reliance on kinship, extended kinship networks, and lack of trust or dependence on the government – have been great sources of strength to them in their new lives in Arkansas. The new saint at the church entrance and the local tienda are outward symbols of significant institutional, political and economic changes that are occurring in many places in the rural South. These results

LATINO IMMIGRATION CONTINUES ON PAGE 6

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Camas Calientes

JORGE H. ATILES
University of Georgia
STEPHANIE A. BOHON
University of Georgia

The term camas calientes (hot beds) refers to housing conditions that are so crowded that people sleep in shifts. It also refers to dissatisfaction with housing conditions – when workers and families move from one place to another looking for better homes. Many Latino immigrant workers coming to Georgia looking for employment are faced with poor housing choices. Due to economic growth, Georgia experienced a boom in Latino immigration in the last decade. The demand for workers created by this growth has led to Latino employment in places like the carpet, construction, poultry and farm industries (see Table 1).

This two-year study looked at the rural Georgia counties with the largest Latino populations in the state (see Table 1). This research included focus groups with Latinos and semi-structured interviews with key informants who reached Latinos on a regular basis (social workers, church staff, policemen, health care providers, teachers, etc).

The focus groups consisted of Latinos from a variety of occupations, from mill workers to administrators and physicians. The purpose of the study was to examine the adaptation process of Latinos in rural Georgia by exploring housing norms, deficits and conditions. It was found that the inability to quickly overcome the problems associated with housing deficits could affect other forms of adaptation to American society. It was also found that deviation from American housing norms is likely to affect the way Latinos are adapting to their new society and community. States like California, Texas and Florida, where Latinos have traditionally settled, have more established resources for incoming immigrants. Latinos who are second generation or who have been there a long time can help newcomers get settled.

In Georgia, many Latinos may not have as much help getting settled due to few services being offered in Spanish and few Spanish-speaking advisors available to them. Once Latinos arrive in Georgia, many are faced with housing problems and live in housing that no one else wants. In the four counties studied, many Latinos were relegated to the lowest quality of housing stock available. The majority of poor housing consists of rental units that tend to be manufactured housing built before 1970 and subsistence apartments. Many live in housing that does not meet the American housing norms of space, tenure, structure type, quality, expenditures and neighborhood [1].

Space norms are based on how many people are in the house compared to the size of the house. Larger Latino families require larger homes, but such housing is rarely available at an affordable price.

Table 1. County Characteristics: Colquitt, Hall, Liberty and Whitfield Counties, 2000.

County	Primary Latino Employing Industry	Total Population	Percent Latino (Number)
Colquitt	Agriculture	42,053	10.8% (4,554)
Hall	Poultry	139,277	19.6% (27,242)
Liberty	Military	61,610	8.2% (5,022)
Whitfield	Textiles	83,525	22.1% (18,419)

Source: Census Bureau. 2000. Summary File 1.

Table 2. Average Household Size by Total Population and Latino Population.

Average Household Size	Colquitt	Hall	Liberty	Whitfield
Total Population	2.63	2.89	2.93	2.82
Latino Population	4.34	5.16	3.25	4.61

Source: Census Bureau. 2000. Summary File 1.

LATINO IMMIGRATION CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

contribute new insight and data on rural immigration experiences and directions for future research on community development, health care, planning and policy in Arkansas and the rural South. Such information can help assist in the assimilation process of new groups of people to our communities.❖

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Deborah O. Erwin is a medical anthropologist and associate professor in the Division of Breast Surgical Oncology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

Table 3. Percent of Population in Occupied Housing Units by Tenure Type.

Tenure Type	Colquitt	Hall	Liberty	Whitfield
Owner Occupied				
Total Population	66%	69%	50%	66%
Latino Population	36%	37%	35%	34%
Renter Occupied				
Total Population	34%	31%	50%	34%
Latino Population	64%	63%	65%	66%

Source: Census Bureau. 2000. Summary File 1.

Table 2 shows the level of crowding experienced by Latinos when compared to the total population.

Tenure norms give priority to owning a home over renting a home. Latinos interviewed desire to live in their own homes in less crowded conditions but were limited to rental housing (see Table 3).

Structure type norms for Americans mean that the home is a detached single family dwelling. Some Latinos attempt to meet this norm by renting or purchasing manufactured housing. Expenditure norms include all of the costs included with the home such as rent, mortgage payment, utilities, insurance and taxes. A good rule of thumb is to keep housing costs at or below 30 percent of the gross household income. However, many Latinos are deviating from this norm and pay much more that 30 percent of their income towards housing. Quality and neighborhood norms should be consistent with the socioeconomic status of the family. The quality norm means that the home should be desirable to the inhabitants and to potential buyers. Neighborhood norms call for things such as schools and access to services and transportation. Latinos, especially those living in rural areas, may not have access to basic infrastructure needs such as sewer and septic systems.

Latinos tend to adapt and adjust to the housing that is available to them, regardless of satisfaction. When a household faces a problem with housing, it can move or remodel, remain dissatisfied, or attempt to reduce the salience of the deficit. The Latinos included in the study were dissatisfied with their housing but were unable to overcome the dissatisfaction because of constraints.

One set of constraints in the Latino population is intra-familial. This includes things such as lack of formal education, low literacy levels, and lack of English proficiency. In Georgia, many Latinos work and live with other Latinos. This can lead to linguistic isolation. Often, Latinos do not have to learn English because they are able to speak Spanish in their communities. In order to fully participate economically and socially, some level of English is necessary. Without these skills, it is harder to have the level of problem solving skills that are necessary to acquire good housing. Also, without a family support system, it is harder to solve problems that arise, such as a housing deficit. Other constraints are extra-familial. The study found extra-familial constraints such as lack of income, lack of information, low supply of adequate and clean housing, and access to home financing and credit to be the biggest obstacles in finding better housing.

It is important to note that employer-employee relationships are not the direct cause of Latinos living in poor housing conditions. In fact, the employers interviewed for this study were concerned with the quality of the housing since it directly affects employee absenteeism and turnover. Latinos families are also aware that a camas caliente lifestyle has an effect on school age children. It is hard for children to move from place to place and change schools. Latinos want to achieve the American housing norms. What keeps Georgia's Latino population from meeting these goals? Lack of affordable housing, lack of sufficient income, poor English skills, lack of documentation (in some cases), and lack of knowledge regarding available housing programs are the factors that keep them from meeting these goals.❖

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Jorge H. Atiles is an assistant professor in Family and Consumer Sciences at the University of Georgia. Stephanie A. Bohon is an assistant professor of Sociology at the University of Georgia.

Names in the News

Joe McGilberry has been named Director of the Mississippi State University Extension Service effective July 1, 2002. McGilberry had been serving as Interim Director since July 2001 when he succeeded Ronald A. Brown. Brown now serves as Executive Director for the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors.

Marion Ray McKinnie is the new Administrator for the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Program at North Carolina A&T State University. McKinnie previously served as Interim Associate Dean for Extension before his March 1, 2002 appointment. He replaces Daniel D. Godfrey who retired.

New staff member joins SRDC

Harry L. Vogel (hvogel@srdc.msstate.edu) joined the Center staff in August as a research associate. Vogel is a demographer from Falls Church, VA. He received his bachelor's degree in sociology from James Madison University and his master's degree in sociology from Western Kentucky University; he is currently working on his doctoral dissertation. His role at the Center involves analyzing demographic and educational assessment data for a report to the Southeast Education Laboratory (SERVE). His research interests include demography/population, social epidemiology and community development.

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Social Networks and Affordable Housing

THE CASE OF BONITA SPRINGS, FLORIDA

JAVIER STANZIOLA
Florida Gulf Coast University

Introduction

In the last fifteen years, the City of Bonita Springs, FL, has changed from a mostly agricultural community to a service-oriented economy. Moreover, the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has caused a considerable number of migrant workers in Bonita Springs and the surrounding areas to lose their jobs. In turn, due to restrictions attached to the federal and state grants that support these type of initiatives, losing their agricultural jobs has meant losing eligibility to live in dormitories; these dormitories are designated for single men working in the fields and trailer communities and only allow families where at least one household member is a farmworker.

For the last two years, a team of researchers at Florida Gulf Coast University has been exploring the effects of these dynamics on the housing market. We first completed a survey to assess the need for affordable housing. We then conducted a study to explore the role of social networks in alleviating this situation.

Survey Results

The survey corroborated the idea that there is a housing shortage in the area. Around 33.3 percent of the domiciles surveyed reported living in single family domiciles in which six or more resided. More than half of these respondents reported living with six to nine people. Eighty-two percent reported requiring better housing accommodations, but 64 percent of those surveyed did not qualify or did not know if they qualified to buy a house or had money to rent a better apartment. More than 60 percent of all respondents reported they earned less than $16,200 a year. Compare this to the median income of Lee County, where Bonita Springs is located, of $47,500 and the median house value in Bonita Springs, $110,000.

This situation is more severe among unrelated individuals living together, particularly single males. Unrelated individuals represented 23 percent of those surveyed and were mostly employed as farmworkers. Seventy-four percent of these individuals earned less than $16,200 a year. The number of males 18 years and over living in a household ranged from one to 14. The distribution is shown in Table 1. Thirty-seven percent of these individuals said there were four or more males 18 years and over living in the household.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Males 18 and Over in Households.

Number of Males 18 and Over in the Household	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	145	35.0
2	69	17.0
3	47	11.0
4	52	13.0
5	35	8.0
6	42	10.0
7	3	0.7
8	16	4.0
9	4	0.9
12	1	0.2
14	1	0.2
Total	415	100.0

Social Networks and Affordable Housing

We then conducted a qualitative study to explore the role of social networks in alleviating this problem. Through interviews, focus groups and secondary research, we looked at social networks not only in terms of the social outcomes they create but also in terms of the actual relationships that exist among members of the Hispanic and Anglo community in Bonita Springs. Our study suggests that labor pools, local radio stations, newspapers and word of mouth are the backbone of the strong links that have helped maintain the constant influx of Hispanics that move to Bonita Springs. At the same time, these networks reinforce their identities and have also facilitated the process of finding solutions to the affordable housing crisis that this migration has caused. Through formal organizations (nonprofit affordable housing alliances and taskforces) and informal action (organizing the community to attend relevant city council meetings), these networks have facilitated reciprocity, mobilized solidarity within the community, created reliable labor for entrepreneurs in southwest Florida, and expanded the pool of potential financial sources for Hispanics. Furthermore, these networks have created linkages between Hispanic and Anglo residents of the city for the purpose of solving a specific problem. These linkages facilitate communication between the more established Anglo community, lending agencies, city officials and business leaders, creating access to external assets, helping diffuse information more easily, and decreasing the transaction cost of buying a house.

The neighborhood studied was not, however, a monolithic community. One street of the neighborhood housed low-income, mostly Hispanic households, while the adjacent street had middle-income, mostly white retired residents. Although concerted efforts have been made to help create bridges among them, these groups still hold different priorities, and their members seldom interact in a political or social fashion. Accordingly, there was some expression of frustration and disapproval within the neighborhood at the idea of conducting a survey that was likely to reveal the housing shortage. Such a study would reveal the need to expand low-income housing for Hispanic residents.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The experience of Bonita Springs is relevant for cities that are planning to incorporate in the near future. Residents and community and political leaders have embraced the unique opportunity of developing and implementing housing and zoning

Tree Planting and Guest Worker Programs

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF IMMIGRATION POLICY ON THE RURAL SOUTH

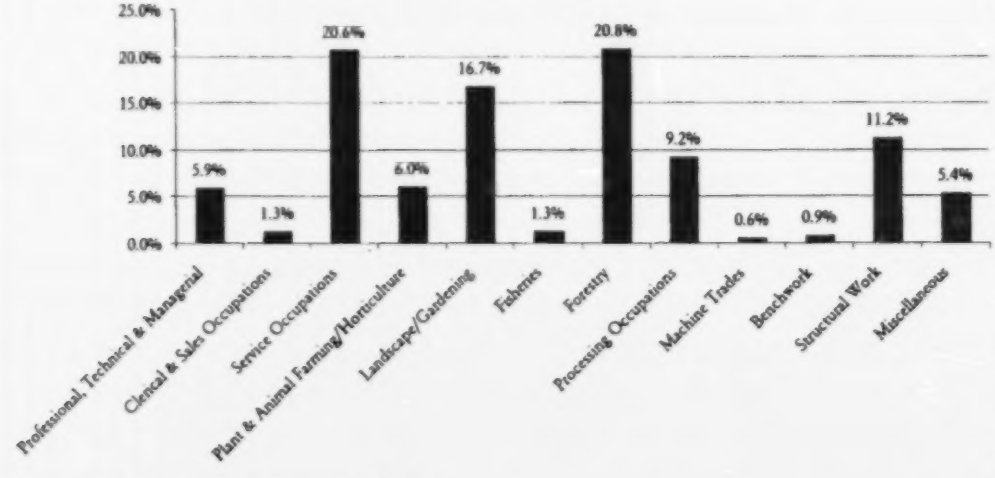
JOSH McDANIEL
Auburn University

Introduction

The dominant image of the rural South is endless fields of row crop agriculture. However, the reality is that much of the rural Southern landscape is forested. In fact, many have proclaimed the South as the "wood basket" for the world due to the rising importance of Southern pines in national and international timber markets [6]. In early December, tree planters from Mexico and Central America arrive in places such as Tilly, AR; Monroeville, AL; and Franklin, GA, and begin the job of planting the more than two million acres of trees that are planted in the South every winter. In the past couple of decades, these workers have helped transform the landscape of the rural South from exhausted agricultural fields and idle pasture to one dominated by forests and pine plantations. However, research has shown that after decades of active recruitment of forest products industries to economically depressed areas of the South such as the Black Belt, rural development has failed to occur, and, in fact, "timber dependency" has helped maintain racially-based inequities in access to jobs in the forest products industry, inadequately funded public schools, and inequitable land concentrations that can be traced back to slave-based agriculture in the pre-Civil War era [1,4,2].

In the South, tree planters and other laborers in forest management are primarily H2B guest workers recruited to work for U.S. forest labor contractors. A smaller proportion of the tree planters are resident aliens or undocumented workers who migrate across the United States working in agriculture, poultry-processing, construction, landscaping, hotels and restaurants. Most of the crews are made up of young men, friends and families from the same city or village. Many are using their earnings to build houses, buy land, access medical care, and generally take care of their families back in their home countries. As migrant workers and guest workers are beginning to work and settle into new areas of the rural South, questions have arisen about the challenges and opportunities they present for rural communities. The primary question is why guest workers and migrant workers are being recruited to areas of high unemployment and persistent poverty to provide labor to an expanding industry. There is also concern about the potential impact of the increased immigration through proposed expansion of guest worker programs on rural communities in the South and the policy implications of changes in immigration policy.

Figure 1. Visas Requested by Occupation Category, 1996-2001.



Source: Data provided by the Department of Labor.

Forest Labor Contractors and the H2B Program

Guest worker programs have a long history in the United States, dating back to the first Bracero program established with Mexico in 1917. A second Bracero program, from the 1940s through the 1960s, resulted in millions of Mexicans immigrating to the United States. The present H2B program came out of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. It was established as a means to supply

TREE PLANTING CONTINUES ON PAGE 10

BONITA SPRINGS CONTINUED

codes for the city in a truly pluralistic fashion. This process has provided Hispanics with a clear and sound voice to express, among other things, their housing needs. More specifically,

- The case of Bonita Springs serves to illustrate the ways in which social networks function and supports further study to both evaluate and institutionalize the types of social networks that are beneficial for the provision of affordable housing.
- For community activists, the main implication of this experience is that there is no need for strong networks among different ethnic groups to solve community problems.

The community can get together to solve specific situations without the need to socialize or engage in other political activities. As suggested by the experience in Bonita Springs, for starters, the community needs to engage in a small manageable problem that, after successful completion, would provide a sense of accomplishment and help the community realize that problems can be solved through community action.❖

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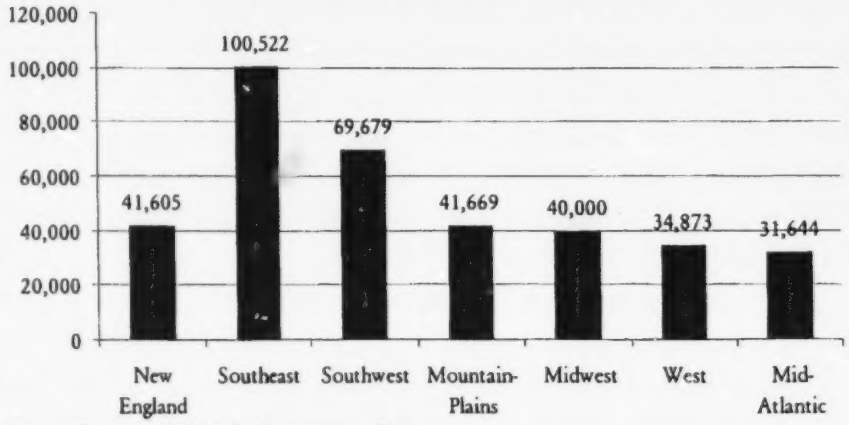
TREE PLANTING CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

temporary guest workers to non-agricultural industries facing labor shortages. The H2B program has a limit of 66,000 work visas per year, but there have been recent moves in Congress to have that limit extended up to 200,000 or 300,000 per year. In the H2B program, employers who can demonstrate that they are facing labor scarcity apply for visas through the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). If approved, the employers are issued a number of visas that they can grant to foreign workers to come to the United States and work for a set amount of time. They are required to pay a prevailing wage established by DOL and provide transportation for the workers, but they are not required to pay for or provide housing.

Figure 2. Number of H2B Guest Worker Visas Requested by Region, 1996-2001.



Source: Data provided by the Department of Labor.

Forestry has been the dominant industry in the program since its inception, accounting for almost 21 percent of all visas requested between 1996 and 2001 (Figure 1). Companies in the Southeast lead all other regions in participation in the H2B program with 100,552 visas requested between 1996 and 2001 (Figure 2). The Southwest region is second with 69,672 visas requested during this time period. Arkansas is included in the Southwest, but many of the forestry companies in Arkansas work throughout the Southeast in Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. So, H2B guest worker representation in the Southeast is likely even higher than shown in the graph.

Many contractors like the H2B program because it gives them a stable, documented workforce. In the past, raids by INS would deplete their crews and leave them without the workers needed to fulfill contracts. The H2B program has allowed the contractors to create their own labor pool of documented workers. Some of the contractors have established recruiting networks in major cities in Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala. Recruiters use ties with family and friends to find workers to fill the 15 to 20 man crews that typically work on planting jobs. Recruiters find the workers to fill the positions, help them with the paperwork for obtaining visas, and assist the workers in obtaining airplane tickets and bus tickets for travel to the United States.

"Invisible" Forest Workers and Rural Communities

As migrants and guest workers are recruited into rural areas in which they previously have not worked and lived in large numbers, their impacts on rural communities will become increasingly important. At present, H2B forestry workers are a relatively "invisible" population. They work in remote, isolated areas; they do not stay in one area for a long period of time; and in general, they are not settling into rural migrant communities. They place very few demands on local government services, and their primary contact with community residents is in trips to the grocery store or to the bank.

Despite their present "invisibility," migrant workers and guest workers in the forest industries will soon be settling into rural areas of the South that do not have a long history of immigration. It is important that policy makers recognize the potential impact of industrial recruitment and expansion of guest worker programs on rural communities. They will be placing new demands on government services, education and health care systems. Recent case studies have expressed guarded optimism about the potential for integrating the new immigrants into the social and economic fabric of rural communities in the South [3,5]. However, in areas that are already dependent on natural resources for employment and opportunity such as the Black Belt of Alabama, increased recruitment of migrants and guest workers may depress wages and working conditions for native workers and further marginalize groups already facing desperate economic conditions.

Efforts to expand guest worker programs could negatively impact rural communities in certain areas of the South. Most guest workers in forestry are being recruited to rural areas of the South with high levels of poverty and unemployment, and their employment is negatively impacting local workers and local labor markets. While their recruitment is not necessarily displacing local workers already employed in forest management, it is negating employment opportunities that should have been created by industry expansion. Guest worker programs have allowed a variety of industries to reduce labor costs for bottom-level positions in areas of the South where industries should be generating economic growth and opportunity.❖

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Josh McDaniel is an assistant professor and social forestry and extension forestry specialist in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences at Auburn University.

SRDC Appoints Associate Director

The SRDC is pleased to announce that Dr. Alan Barefield has been appointed associate director of the Center, a new position jointly established by the SRDC and the Mississippi State University Extension Service. In this new capacity, Barefield will devote 75 percent of his time to SRDC activities and one-fourth to efforts of the Mississippi State University Extension Service's Enterprise and Community Resource Development Unit (E&CRD).

Barefield received his doctoral degree from Texas A&M University and completed master's and baccalaureate degrees at Murray State University in Kentucky. At present, he is associate professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Tennessee. During his nine years at Tennessee, Barefield has been a critical cog in strengthening and enhancing UT's Extension community and economic development program.

In his new role at the SRDC, Barefield will play a vital role in implementing the Ford Foundation-funded Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI), an important program that is designed to build strong and sustainable partnerships between the South's land-grant institutions and a network of rural community colleges in the region. The SRDC, along with its sister regional center, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, are spearheading the effort to build these new land-grant university/rural community college partnerships. Barefield brings community college collaborative skills to the RCCI table. This includes his ongoing work with Tennessee's small business development centers, located within the state's community college system, in delivering innovative and timely small business management and marketing workshops.

Aside from his SRDC activities, Barefield will provide leadership to the design and delivery of innovative Extension-based community/economic development programs that are responsive to the needs of rural people and communities in Mississippi and the Southern region. His current involvement in developing and conducting the Kentucky/Tennessee Institute for Sustainable Development will prove invaluable as he assumes the leadership role of the Extension E&CRD role in Mississippi.

"We are so excited that Alan has agreed to join the SRDC team. His economic development expertise will complement the current strengths and resources of the Center."

-Bo Beaulieu

Bo Beaulieu, director of the SRDC, noted, "We are so excited that Alan has agreed to join the SRDC team. His economic development expertise will complement the current strengths and resources of the Center." Beaulieu added, "His areas of expertise will position the SRDC to be a more effective resource to our land-grant universities and our rural development partners in the years ahead."

Barefield is no stranger to the SRDC. Over the years he has served as a faculty member for the Southern Region Community Development Institute and was a key player in planning and initiating the "e-Commerce: Impacting the Way We Do Business" conference. He is presently giving leadership to the "Value-Added Entrepreneurship" training program that will be held this December. All of these activities have been sponsored by the SRDC.

Alan, his wife Amy and their two children will join the SRDC family in mid-January 2003.

Millennium Series

The Millennium Series, first introduced in January 2000, is intended to offer insights to issues important to economic development in the South. It is designed to serve as an information tool for policymakers and analysts at the federal, regional, state or local levels; for university/college researchers and educators; for rural development and related agencies; for nongovernmental organizations; for media representatives; and for people/groups having an interest in or concern with the long-term viability of the South.

The series addresses eight broad themes: the changing demography of the rural South; agriculture in transition; managing the natural and environmental resources of the South; education and workforce issues; diversifying the rural economy; family and child well-being; health care quality and access; and building communities in a time of policy changes.

The series aims to stimulate discussion about the rural South. Such public dialogue involving local leaders, citizens and community organizations can serve as an important foundation for creating healthy communities in the region.

The recent issue, "The Community-Level Impacts of Economic Development: The Role of Local Labor Market Adjustments," was contributed by a team of researchers from Clemson University. The February 2002 issue featured Eric Scorsone's work, "Industrial Clusters: Enhancing Rural Economies through Business Linkages." The first 24 issues of the series have encompassed topics from rural community colleges to water quantity and quality in the South.

Sponsors of the series include the Southern Rural Development Center, the Farm Foundation, the USDA Economic Research Service and the 29 Southern land-grant institutions.

If you are interested in contributing a paper for publication in this series or if you would like to submit a topic, contact the SRDC by emailing bonniet@srdc.msstate.edu.

For guidelines and technical details required of each paper, contact emilye@srdc.msstate.edu.

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Upcoming conferences...

November 2002

November 21-22: Sponsored by the Economic Research Service and held in Washington, DC, the *Measuring Rural Diversity Conference* will showcase researchers and their current work on rural conditions such as demographic changes, business trends and local distress. For more information, visit the conference website at http://ers.usda.gov/briefing/rurality/index.htm#conference.

December 2002

December 3-5: The *Value-Added Entrepreneurship* conference, created to prepare Extension faculty to develop and implement an economic development program based on entrepreneurship for businesses focusing on value-added agricultural products, will take place in Franklin (Nashville), Tennessee. For more information, contact Bonnie Teater at 662-325-3207 or bonniet@srdc.msstate.edu.

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